

## Nevada Division of Environmental Protection Bureau of Water Quality Planning

# Home Heating Oil Tanks FACT SHEET

### Why should I be concerned?

Homeowners who depend on local ground water for their source of drinking water should be aware of the need to manage their home heating oil tanks properly. Shallow wells, springs, and surface water can be very susceptible to contamination from fuel tanks. Heating oil contains a number of potentially toxic compounds, primarily Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons (TPH).

In addition to the health and safety risks, improper handling of oil tanks can be very expensive, with fines, liability for clean up, and significant loss of property value.

### Preventive measures

Whenever you install a heating oil tank, carefully follow the manufacturer's recommended practices for installation. Proper installation is one sure way to

minimize the leaking potential of the tank or the piping connected to it. Even scratches in a metal tank caused by careless installation can increase corrosion and tank deterioration.

Other recommended preventive measures include: testing the tank periodically for leaks, and measuring the tank inventory on a monthly (or more frequent) basis to help detect leaks before major problems develop.

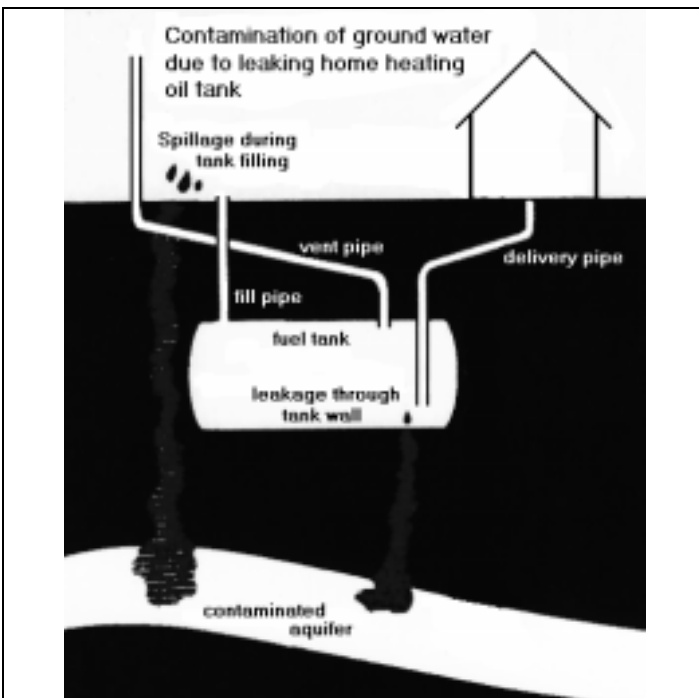
Since many older tanks are made of bare steel, tank corrosion or piping problems will cause leaks sooner or later. The U.S. EPA has determined that over 50% of the regulated underground storage tanks are leaking. If your tank is more than 20 years old, or if you don't know its age, immediately make a special effort to determine whether leaks exist.

### How to locate and properly abandon an unused tank that is not leaking

In some cases, you may not even know if there is an underground tank on your property, such as a tank that was abandoned years ago. Tanks no longer in use can cause problems for owners many years later. They will continue to corrode and, if they still contain oil, will likely contaminate ground water.

Try to determine the location of any unused tanks on your property. You can do this by talking to former property owners, neighbors or local companies that might have serviced the tank. You can search for old photographs that might show vents or pipes, or you can use metal detectors.

Try to find out whether the tanks still hold product or have holes. These tanks can be safely emptied and either filled with inert material (typically sand or cement) or pulled from the ground and disposed in a landfill or at a recycling facility.



## **Is there financial assistance for removing a non-leaking home heating oil tank?**

Yes, there are some sources of financial assistance available for removal of unused oil tanks that are not leaking.

- Section 319 of the Clean Water Act 1987 Amendments provides for funds, which require 50% local matching, for projects that improve water quality. Under this provision, community entities (as opposed to individuals), apply to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP), Bureau of Water Quality Planning with a written proposal describing their project. The community entities can be, for example, GIDs (General Improvement Districts) or Homeowner Associations. The Bureau then reviews all the proposals received, prioritizes them, and awards the funds appropriately. Ground water protection is a high priority at the federal and State level. For more information, please contact the Bureau of Water Quality Planning, (702) 687-4670, extension 3100.

- The State Revolving Fund provides loans (and other forms of financial assistance, but not grants) with interest at or below the market rate, to assist municipalities or other public entities in projects to control water pollution. The entity also has to write a description of the project, including design, construction drawings and specifications. The Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Water Pollution Control, reviews the document and, upon approval, executes the contract. For more information, please contact the Bureau of Water Pollution Control, (702) 687-4670, extension 3140.

## **What happens when you find a leak?**

Do you have to increase the frequency of times you fill your tank? If you do, then you may have a leaking tank. There are some important things to know and do if you suspect that your tank is leaking.

If you have a spill, and it is greater than 25 gallons from any tank containing a petroleum product - whether it be above or below ground, or even a vehicle-mounted tank - State law requires that you notify the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

NDEP must also be notified if any petroleum product is discovered in ground water or in a volume of soil greater than 3 cubic yards.

Take whatever actions are necessary to immediately stop the release. Remedy the problem according to recommendations you receive when you report the spill or leak. Also do not smoke or use water in the area; and turn off all electrical equipment in the area.

## **If I have to remove a home heating oil tank that is leaking, can I get financial assistance?**

The Division of Environmental Protection administers the Nevada Petroleum Fund, which can reimburse tank owners for a substantial percentage of costs incurred in clean up activities. Home heating oil tanks are automatically enrolled in the Fund, and as such they are eligible for funding. The Fund functions as an insurance policy. Tanks of 1,100 gallons or less are covered for corrective actions for \$250,000, with a \$250 deductible. Above ground tanks may also be eligible for financial assistance through the Fund, if enrolled in the Fund.

## **How can I get more information?**

To request additional information on NDEP underground storage tank regulations, financial assistance, and tank testing methods call:

- Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Underground Storage Tank Program (702) 687-4670 ext. 3047.

To report petroleum product spills, call:

- Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Corrective Actions (702) 687-4670.

If you are interested in finding out more about protecting your ground water, or if you have any other water quality questions, you can contact the Bureau of Water Quality Planning, at (702) 687-4670, extension 3088.